

VZCZCXRO2136
OO RUEHCN RUEHGH
DE RUEHBJ #0606/01 1502244
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 302244Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6978
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0300
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 010606

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SUBJECT: MAY 25 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: HAMAS FM VISIT, IRAN
NUCLEAR ISSUE, INDONESIA EARTHQUAKE, INDIA DEFENSE MINISTER
VISIT, EAST TIMOR EVACUATION

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Summary

1. Key points made at the May 25 MFA press briefing are as follows:

-- FM Mahmoud Al-Zahhar will visit Beijing to attend the China-Arab Cooperation Forum. China will use the opportunity to explain China's position that Hamas needs to give up violence, recognize Israel and abide by past agreements between Israel and "Palestine."

-- Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo will attend the June 1 P-5 plus Germany meeting in Vienna to discuss the Iran nuclear issue

-- DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun will visit China from May 30 to June 6 to exchange views on issues of common interest, including the Korean nuclear issue.

-- China has dispatched 430 peacekeeping "officials" to Sudan.

-- India Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee and PRC Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan signed an MOU to increase military exchanges.

-- Beijing provided Indonesia USD 2 million in cash and RMB 10 million in emergency material and equipment and sent China's international emergency assistance team in response to the earthquake.

-- China sent two charter planes to evacuate about 200 overseas Chinese and some PRC Embassy staff from East Timor.

End Summary.

Hamas FM Al-Zahhar's Visit

¶2. MFA Spokesperson Liu Jianchao answered numerous questions regarding Palestinian FM Mahmoud Al-Zahhar visit to China to participate in the second China-Arab Cooperation Forum. FM Al-Zahhar will meet with FM Li Zhaoxing, although Liu made a point to not respond to the specific question on whether it would be a bilateral meeting. Beijing considers the current situation very worrisome and will use the opportunity of the Palestinian Foreign Minister's visit to explain China's principled, clear and consistent position that Hamas needs to give-up violence, recognize Israel and abide by past agreement between Israel and "Palestine." China also firmly believes that the parties should follow all UN resolutions, abide by the principle of land for peace and engage in direct consultations. China does not support the use of economic sanctions or a blockade. Acknowledging that Israel has expressed concern about FM Al-Zahhar's visit, Liu said Beijing has explained its longstanding position clearly to Tel Aviv and is confident that this matter will not affect long-term Sino-Israeli relations.

Iran Nuclear Issue

¶3. Liu reported that Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo will attend the June 1 P-5 plus Germany meeting in Vienna to discuss the Iran nuclear issue. China's continuing position is that the situation needs to be solved peacefully through diplomatic means, with all parties taking constructive attitudes to create a favorable environment. The PRC appreciates the EU-3's plan to address Iran's reasonable requests. While Iran is allowed peaceful use of nuclear energy as a signatory to the NPT, Iran must also adhere to all of its other commitments under the NPT, Liu affirmed.

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DPRK Foreign Minister's Visit

¶4. Liu confirmed that DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun will visit Beijing from May 30 to June 6. He will meet with Premier Wen Jiabao and FM Li to exchange views on bilateral relations and issues of common interest, including the Korean nuclear issue. FM Paek will also visit Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

PRC Dispatches Peacekeepers to Sudan

¶5. Liu said China has dispatched 430 peacekeeping "officials" to Sudan. This is another example of China's important role in international peacekeeping operations, including Haiti and East Timor. As for the situation in Darfur, Liu said China hopes the UN and African Union will continue to consult and reach an agreement quickly.

Another Japan-PRC FM Meeting?

¶6. In response to question about Japan FM Taro Aso requesting to meet FM Li at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Kuala Lumpur, Liu said any future meetings will be discussed via diplomatic channels. The Yasukuni Shrine issue is the most important bilateral problem and relations will only improve after it is resolved properly, he stated.

PRC-India Sign Military MOU

¶7. In response to a question from a Reuters reporter, Liu said India Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee has met with FM Li Zhaoxing and Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan. The two defense ministers signed an MOU to increase mil-mil exchanges that will bring mutual benefit to both countries and is not

targeted against any specific third nation. Both sides agree on the overall positive nature of the relationship and that increased military exchanges will be beneficial to the further development of cooperative relations and the formulation of a strategic partnership.

PRC Responds to Indonesia Earthquake

¶8. The Government of China took swift action following the Indonesia earthquake, Liu told a China News Agency reporter. Beijing immediately provided USD 2 million in cash and will send RMB 10 million in emergency material and equipment. China's international emergency assistance team is already on the ground in the affected area. Beijing is not aware of any PRC citizens injured or killed by the earthquake.

East Timor: PRC Evacuates Overseas Chinese

¶9. Liu stated that China is very worried about the situation in East Timor and hopes it quickly stabilizes. In response to the deteriorating circumstances, China sent two charter planes to evacuate about 200 of the approximately 500 overseas Chinese living in East Timor. An unspecified number of PRC Embassy staff also returned to China on the flights.

Afghanistan

¶10. Liu said Afghanistan is a close neighbor and China monitors the situation there very closely. China hopes the situation stabilizes as soon as possible. The Government of China has requested the Afghanistan government ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and the PRC Embassy in Kabul.

Montenegro Independence Referendum

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¶11. Answering a UPI question on whether China will recognize an independent Montenegro, Liu said that China has taken note of the referendum in Montenegro and will respect the choice of the Montenegro people. Liu said there is no relation to the Taiwan issue because Taiwan is an indisputable part of China.

PRC Withdrawal from Naval Exercise

¶12. Liu responded to a Global Radio News reporter's question on China's withdrawal from an international maritime exercise sponsored by Japan by saying the PRC naval vessels had "other arrangements."

Case of Lai Changxing

¶13. Liu batted aside questions about whether China's most-wanted fugitive Lai Changxing would be returning to China, simply saying he is still in Canada.

Visits to China

¶14. Philippine VP Noli De Castro will visit June 4-9. Ghana FM Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo-Addo will visit June 5-8. Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin will visit June 5-7. Ecuador FM Carrion will also be visiting soon, although Liu declined to provide dates.

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